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SUBJECT: DRC ELECTIONS SITREP 1

REF: KINSHASA 1208

¶1. (U) The Democratic Republic of Congo remains largely calm on the eve of the July 30 presidential and legislative elections. A few isolated security incidents have taken place in Kinshasa and Mbuji Mayi in the past day, but they have not kept election workers nationwide from completing last-minute preparations for tomorrow's vote. Across the country, potential voters continue to express their desire to head to the polls, indicating the potential for a heavy turnout, particularly outside Kinshasa. The security presence in Kinshasa itself was evident, with several MONUC armored patrols circulating in the downtown area, in addition to a noticeable Congolese police presence.

¶2. (U) Official political campaigning ended at midnight July 28, with rallies and demonstrations prohibited the weekend of the election. Candidates appear to be abiding by that regulation, as election observers throughout the country report that no public political activity is taking place. In downtown Kinshasa, streets that until yesterday were completely covered by campaign propaganda have returned to their pre-campaign appearance, as candidates voluntarily took down their posters and banners so as not to be in violation of the law. (Note: There is no provision in the DRC's electoral law, however, which states that propaganda had to be removed after the campaign deadline passed. End note.)

¶3. (U) Assistant Secretary of State Jendayi Frazer, who is leading the USG election observation mission, met in Kinshasa with CEI President Abbe Apollinaire Malu Malu and the heads of several international observation missions. A/S Frazer spoke with the CEI president regarding the Commission's work in preparing for the election as well as its plans to manage the post-election period, including the announcement of results and the calendar for the second round of voting later this year. Members from several international observation missions, including the European Union, provided A/S Frazer with an overview of their assessments concerning logistical aspects of the electoral process and efforts at voter education. In addition, A/S Frazer spoke with members of the international and Congolese press regarding the elections.

¶4. (U) Workers with the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) spent the day feverishly preparing polling stations, setting up voting booths and making last-minute deliveries of election materials to the more than 50,000 voting sites. In the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu, as well as Ituri District, the majority of polling stations visited by EmbOffs appeared to be ready for the July 30 vote, with voter lists clearly displayed and voter kits ready to be distributed. Some polling sites, though, did not appear as well-prepared, but CEI workers said they were expecting materials to arrive later in the day. In Goma, PolCouns

reported that all voting stations have received their ballots and other essential materiel, although many were missing desks and chairs. CEI workers in Goma, however, said they have not yet been paid, despite having been told they were to receive their stipend from the CEI this weekend. CEI officials in Kinshasa said they are aware of the problem and have today sent payments to Goma and other locations where workers have not been paid. Nearly all poll workers EmbOfs met, however, were in good spirits, saying they would show up for work tomorrow out of civic duty, even if they had not received their salaries.

15. (U) An inter-institutional meeting (comprised of the institutions of the transitional government) was held July 29 in Kinshasa, although three of the DRC's four vice presidents did not attend. While President Joseph Kabila and Vice President Abdoulaye Yerodia appeared, Vice Presidents Jean-Pierre Bemba and Azarias Ruberwa did not. During the meeting, Malu Malu presented a timetable leading to the next round of elections with the possible date of October 29 for the next round of voting for provincial assemblies and, if necessary, a second round of presidential balloting. The CEI released July 28 the final list of 13,478 provincial assembly candidates, and Malu Malu is expected to make a public announcement regarding the date for the second round of elections later this evening. A planned meeting of the "Espace Presidentiel," which had been planned the inter-institutional session, was canceled since Bemba and Ruberwa were not in attendance, although members present emphasized the importance for the "Espace" to meet the week following elections.

16. (U) A few isolated security incidents have been reported

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across the country in the last day, none of which have considerably disturbed the electoral process. On July 29 in Mbuji Mayi, a CEI truck (which reportedly did not have a police escort) carrying 134 electoral kits was attacked and burned. CEI officials said, though, that no ballots were destroyed in the fire, and replacement equipment is being flown immediately to the city. MONUC-Mbuji Mayi Head of Office Mamady Kouyate said it is not yet known who is responsible for the attack. Kouyate also said anonymous leaflets appeared in Mbuji Mayi July 28 threatening anyone who attempted to vote. In Kinshasa, an unmanned drone from the European Union Force (EUFOR) on a test mission crashed the evening of July 28 while attempting to land at a local airport. The drone reportedly crashed into a house which caught on fire, resulting in four wounded. Also in Kinshasa on July 28, security guards belonging to Vice President Ruberwa were shot at by elements of the presidential guard on the outskirts of the city. One of Ruberwa's guards was reportedly killed during the incident. In a press conference the evening of July 28, Ruberwa condemned the attack, but appealed to his followers to remain calm.

17. (U) In response to the security incidents in Kinshasa on July 27 (reftel), the International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) issued a communique July 28 condemning the perpetrators responsible for the violence, which included the looting of the offices of the High Media Authority, the National Observatory for Human Rights, as well as several police stations. The CIAT saluted the courage and self-control of the Congolese police in the face of such acts and encouraged police officials to continue their work with determination and professionalism.

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